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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 000382

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/17/2030  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [IN](#) [PK](#)  
SUBJECT: MFA PROVIDES DETAILS ON UPCOMING FOREIGN  
SECRETARY-LEVEL MEETING WITH INDIA

REF: A. NEW DELHI 0291  
[1](#)B. ISLAMABAD 0161

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C/REL UK) Summary: MFA Director General for South Asia Afrasiab Mehdi Hashim told Deputy PolCouns that Pakistan and India will be free to raise all issues at the foreign secretaries' meeting scheduled for February 25 in New Delhi. He claimed that the Pakistanis will focus on trying to persuade the Indians to resume the Composite Dialogue. Afrasiab argued that, as the larger country and the one with global ambitions, India should show greater understanding and flexibility toward Pakistan. He said that the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meeting of interior/home ministers had been postponed yet again, likely until June. Indian High Commission Political Counselor G.V. Srinivas told Deputy PolCouns on February 12 that India's offer of the foreign secretaries' meeting reflected recognition that Pakistan had made some progress on the counter-terrorism front by initiating a trial against the Mumbai case defendants. He admitted, however, that the timing was also connected to the influence of new Indian National Security Advisor Shivshankar Menon. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C/REL UK) During a February 16 meeting with Deputy PolCouns, MFA Director General for South Asia Afrasiab Mehdi Hashim provided the MFA's perspective on the upcoming meeting in New Delhi of Pakistan and India's foreign secretaries. Afrasiab confirmed the meeting will take place on February 25, and said he will be a member of the delegation that accompanies Foreign Secretary Bashir. He claimed that there will be no formal, set agenda. Rather, both countries will be free to raise any issues they would like to. Afrasiab did not believe that the terrorist attack in Pune would derail the meeting.

[1](#)3. (C/REL UK) Afrasiab stressed that the Pakistani delegation will be going to New Delhi "with an open mind." He said the Pakistanis will focus on trying to persuade the Indians to resume the Composite Dialogue, but he was not optimistic about the prospects for India's agreeing to do so.

[1](#)4. (C/REL UK) Afrasiab, who previously served as Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner in New Delhi, stressed that it is in the interests of both countries to achieve progress on the core issues, but argued that India -- as the larger country and the one with global ambitions -- should show greater understanding and flexibility. Pakistan, he explained, can

draw significant economic benefits from India's rise if India agrees to greater bilateral cooperation in commerce and tourism. Afrasiab also claimed that the Indians have not reciprocated positive gestures from the Pakistani side. He noted that ISI Director General LTG Pasha had attended a Ramadan iftar hosted by the Indian High Commission in Islamabad in September 2009, but claimed that RAW Director K.C. Verma has not attended any similar Pakistani-sponsored events in New Delhi. Afrasiab also complained that while Pakistanis are able to watch Indian television channels -- and through them, gain a better understanding of India -- the Indian government has not granted Pakistani television broadcasters access to the Indian market.

15. (C/REL UK) Afrasiab also informed Deputy PolCouns that, at Sri Lanka's request, the meeting in Islamabad of interior/home ministers from the member states of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) will not take place in late March, but will instead be postponed yet again, most likely until June. (Note: This SAARC meeting would provide an opportunity for a bilateral side meeting between Pakistani Interior Minister Malik and Indian Home Minister Chidambaram. End Note.)

16. (C/REL UK) On February 12, Indian High Commission Political Counselor G.V. Srinivas told Deputy PolCouns that India was open to discussion of all issues at the foreign secretaries' meeting and would not prejudge what the meeting might ultimately lead to. Srinivas claimed that in offering the meeting, India's leadership had recognized that Pakistan had made some progress on the counter-terrorism front by

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initiating a trial against the seven defendants in the Mumbai case, even though Pakistan has not taken steps to dismantle terrorist infrastructure. When PolCouns asked if the timing of India's offer might also have been connected to the departure of Indian National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan and his replacement by Shivshankar Menon, Srinivas conceded the importance of Menon's influence on India's decision.

17. (C/REL UK) Comment: The New Delhi meeting will be a milestone if it manages to lead to regular engagement between the two sides aimed at resolving core issues, including Kashmir and terrorism. Correctly or not, the Pakistanis believe U.S. engagement with India was a factor in the Indian turn-about on talks. We should continue to take advantage of opportunities with both parties to encourage sustained engagement on the broad range of bilateral issues.  
PATTERSON